



Focus

Hazardous Sites List

Background

The first step in the cleanup process is to investigate the site. Once Ecology receives a complaint about a piece of property or the practices of an owner or operator of a piece of property, an Ecology inspector will go to the site and conduct an initial investigation. This involves looking at the present conditions of the site for signs of possible spills or discharges and the use and storage of hazardous waste. If Ecology determines further work is required after the initial investigation, a site hazard assessment will be conducted.

A site hazard assessment provides Ecology with basic information about a site. Ecology then uses the Washington Ranking Method to estimate the potential threat the site poses, if not cleaned up. Once a site goes through the ranking method and is ranked, it will appear on the Hazardous Sites List. The Hazardous Sites List will eventually contain ranking and status information on all sites needing further cleanup work.

How Are Sites Ranked?

Sites are ranked using the Washington Ranking Method. Working together, Ecology and the Science Advisory Board developed the ranking system to categorize contaminated sites based on the potential threat they pose to human health and the environment. Sites are ranked on a scale of one to five, with one representing the highest level of concern and five the lowest. When ranking a site, the primary exposure routes that could pose a risk to the public and the environment are taken into consideration. These are air, surface water and ground water.

Hazard ranking is not an evaluation of the absolute risk a site poses to human health and the environment. Rather, a site's rank is relative to the scores received by other ranked sites in the state. Information gathered during the site hazard assessment is used to determine a site's relative risk.

How Does the Site Ranking Affect Cleanup?

Ranking a site helps Ecology determine where to spend funds. However, public concern, a need for an immediate response, and the availability of cleanup staff also affect which sites get first priority for cleanup.

Can Site Rankings Change?

A site's rank can change. Ecology may re-rank a site if additional information is discovered that changes the site's relative health and environmental risk. The ranking system works similar to grading on a curve. The highest scoring sites are ranked as ones and the lowest as fives. Thus, adding or removing sites from the list over time may also affect a site's rank.

How Does a Site Get Removed From the List?

A site may be removed from the list only if the site is cleaned up. In some cases, long-term monitoring may be required to ensure the cleanup is adequate to protect the public and the environment. Ecology will hold a public notice for any site it proposes to remove from the Hazardous Sites List.

What Does "Site Status" Mean?

Each site on the Hazardous Sites List is categorized according to the status of the cleanup at the site. The site status categories used by Ecology are intended to give a general indication of the progress at the site. Typical categories include:

Awaiting further remedial action: This means cleanup work has not yet started at the site. Only a site hazard assessment has been done on the property.

Remedial action in progress: These are sites at which Ecology or the responsible party (with Ecology's oversight) has started investigations, active construction, or actual cleanup work.

Construction complete: At these sites all major cleanup work has been completed, but confirmational monitoring or operation and maintenance may continue to be performed at the site.

Independent remedial action: This indicates that the site owner/operator or the responsible party has independently conducted cleanup at the site.

To Find Out More

For more information regarding a specific site on the Hazardous Sites List, contact the regional office for the site.

Northwest Regional Office, Bellevue, Steve Alexander (425) 649-7054

Southwest Regional Office, Lacey, Dave Jansen (360) 407-6241

Central Regional Office, Yakima, Don Abbott (509) 454-7838

Eastern regional Office, Spokane, Flora Goldstein, (509) 456-7693

Industrial Section, Lacey, Paul Skyllingstad, (360) 407-6949

For a copy of the Hazardous Sites List, call the Toxics Cleanup Program at (360) 407-7170 or 1 (800) 826-7716.